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Title:

Speech at Seat Belt Demonstration, Rainsfords Metal Products Pty. Ltd.

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, MR. DUNSTAN, AT SEAT BELT DEMONSTRATION,
RAINSFORDS METAL PRODUCTS PTY. LTD.

29/11/71.

MR. RAINSFORD, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

YOU HAVE, OF COURSE, SELECTED A MOST APPROPRIATE DAY ON WHICH TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR NEW SEAT BELT DEVICE - DAY ONE OF THE OPERATION OF THE NEW LAW REQUIRING THE WEARING OF SEAT BELTS. IT SEEMS - AT LEAST FROM A SPOT CHECK MADE ON THE WAY TO THE OFFICE TODAY - THAT IT'S OFF TO A GOOD START. DRIVERS OF MOST OF THE CARS FITTED WITH BELTS WHICH I SAW WERE WEARING THEM. I HOPE THAT VERY SHORTLY - CERTAINLY WELL BEFORE THE THREE-WEEK GRACE PERIOD EXPIRES THAT ALL ARE DOING SO. THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT BELTS SAVE LIVES. A LOT OF NONSENSE HAS BEEN TALKED IN THE SEAT BELT DEBATE ABOUT HOW THE REQUIREMENT THAT THEY SHOULD BE WORN IS AN INFRINGEMENT OF THE CITIZEN'S CIVIL LIBERTIES. SO, BY THE SAME TOKEN, IS THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE SAME CITIZEN SHOULD LIMIT HIS SPEED IN BUILT-UP AREAS TO 35 MILES AN HOUR. THE EVIDENCE IS OVERWHELMING THAT SEAT BELTS SAVE LIVES. AND IN THE FACE OF THE CONTINUOUSLY APPALLING ROAD ACCIDENT TOLL IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE ADOPT ANY MEASURE WHICH PROMISES TO REDUCE IT EVEN FRACTIONALLY.

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THE GOVERNMENT WELL APPRECIATES THE TERRIBLE PRICE WE PAY IN WASTE AND SUFFERING AS A RESULT OF ROAD ACCIDENTS. IN THE PAST SEVEN MONTHS WE'VE DONE WHAT WE CAN TO IMPROVE THE POSITION. IN THIS WE'VE HAD A MOST VALUABLE GUIDE IN THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF ENQUIRY INTO ROAD SAFETY - BETTER KNOWN AS THE PAK-POY REPORT.

RECORD SUMS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED TO TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND RAILWAY CROSSINGS. THE POINTS DEMERIT SYSTEM HAS BEEN BROUGHT IN AND THE FIRST SUSPENSIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE. WE ARE ESTABLISHING A DRIVER TRAINING CENTRE. ALSO ON THE EDUCATION FRONT, THIS YEAR HAS SEEN THE INTRODUCTION OF ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION COURSES TO THE SYLLABUSES OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SCHOOLS.

STILL THE FIGURES ARE HORRIFYING. SO FAR THIS YEAR 261 PEOPLE HAVE DIED, NEEDLESSLY, ON THE ROADS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA. AND THE CHRISTMAS SEASON HAS YET TO COME. THERE'S SOME COMFORT - BUT NOT VERY MUCH - TO BE GAINED FROM THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT'S AN IMPROVEMENT ON LAST YEAR - THIS TIME IN 1970 THE FIGURE WAS 310. IT'S AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO US TO EXPAND OUR SAFETY EFFORT BUT 261 DEAD IS A SHOCKING, UNACCEPTABLE FIGURE.

THE ONLY WAY WE'LL MAKE A REAL IMPACT ON IT IS TO MAKE EVERY ROAD USER CONSCIOUS OF HIS AND HER RESPONSIBILITIES.

WITHOUT DRIVER AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY, SAFETY CAMPAIGNS, LAWS, EXTRA POLICE PATROLS, ROAD IMPROVEMENTS WILL HAVE ONLY A VERY MARGINAL EFFECT.

THERE IS, IN FACT, A NOTE OF CAUTION TO BE SOUNDED ABOUT THE NEW SEAT BELT LAW. THE FIGURES PROVE THAT BELTS SAVE LIVES FOR DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS. BUT THEY DO NOT CONFER TOTAL IMMUNITY FROM ACCIDENT, INJURY AND DEATH. WEAR A BELT PLEASE - WHETHER REQUIRED BY LAW OR NOT - BUT DON'T AS A RESULT RELAX YOUR CAUTION ON THE ROAD.

SIR, YOU'RE RIGHTLY PROUD OF YOUR NEW SEAT BELT DEVICE. IT'S FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE SKILL AND RESOURCE YOUR COMPANY HAS SHOWN IN ITS 27 YEARS OF OPERATIONS.

I HOPE THE TIME AND MONEY WHICH HAVE GONE INTO ITS DEVELOPMENT PROVE WORTHWHILE. FOR THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA THIS WILL BE TRUE IF EVEN ONE LIFE IS SAVED, ONE INJURY PREVENTED, AS A RESULT.